

Washington, DC — Today Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) joined Congressman Marty Meehan (D-MA) in introducing a resolution opposing the escalation of the War in Iraq and calling on the President to first seek Congressional approval for plans to raise troop levels above the current level of 132,000. Speaking from the House Floor, Congressman Blumenauer delivered the following statement:

“Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

“No matter what you call it, another escalation in the war in Iraq is wrong. I will oppose in both word and deed any effort to send more troops. We have tried it before. It will not just mean more American casualties; it will bring more violence to the Iraqis while adding to the burden on our already strained armed forces. We should start instead by bringing our troops home, not sending more into harm's way in what the President's advisors have already admitted is a political decision and not a strategic one.

“Let's take advantage of the new congressional leadership to change direction in what Americans know is our most important issue -- ending the war in Iraq. We should start with a resolution the Bush administration used to authorize this disaster. Knowing what we know now, the authorization before us bears little relation to reality. Instead, the committees of jurisdiction should use their upcoming hearings to craft new legislation that will mean a withdrawal of our troops as well as guide our continued involvement in Iraq until that withdrawal is complete. I will introduce legislation later this month that would provide exactly that sort of guide by refocusing our efforts on political, diplomatic, and economic strategies.

“Most important and most immediately, Congress has clear authority through its power of the purse. We must demand accountability for how money is spent, who is getting how much, and for what purpose. We need to target war profiteering. There are too many accounts of contractors who have taken taxpayer dollars and abandoned our troops under fire and the Iraqi people in need. We need an entity like the Truman Commission during World War II to aggressively investigate contractors, punish war profiteers, and recover misspent funds by canceling any failed or fraudulent contracts. By redirecting as much of the money as possible to projects run for and by Iraqis, we can repair that damaged country as cost-effectively as possible.

"We must also reconsider the unprecedented privatization of our military effort. The outsourcing of these basic support functions in Iraq has left contractors unaccountable to the American people, immune from military law, and has cost the taxpayers much more than we have needed to spend.

"While we are at it, congress should end the outsourcing of our work. It should be embarrassing to the Republican leadership that it took the Iraq Study Group to provide the oversight and accountability that Congress should have done these past four years.

"We need to work to make sure the political discussions surrounding Iraq is not just more civil but more effective. We need to make it possible to debate this issue in terms of facts and the policy consequences and not hide behind the cloud of politics. In the 2002, 2004, and 2006 election cycles, there was lots of talk about Iraq, but people didn't tell the truth. Instead, the issue was manipulated for political purposes. We must resist the effort to reduce this discussion to how it will impact the next election rather than how we got into this mess and how we are going to get out of it.

"In all of these conversations, we need to be dealing with the long-term security of the United States. We must look at the President's plan to escalate the war in Iraq in the context of those violent fundamentalists around the world that would do us harm, threats of genocide in Darfur and chaos in Somalia, nuclear proliferation, global warming, and the loss of America's influence in the world. In none of those areas does escalating the war in Iraq make the world a safer place. The American people would welcome Congress doing our job right. Only then can we turn this disaster around and provide the security for families in America and around the world."